

R03-OW-2010-0736

Town of Tappahannock

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November 4, 2010

NOV 09 2010

Water Docket
Environmental Protection Agency
Mail Code: 28221T
1200 Pennsylvania, Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Re: EPA Water Docket ID No. EPA-R03-OW-2010-0736, Draft Total Maximum Daily Load ("TMDL") for the Chesapeake Bay; and Virginia Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan ("WIP")

Dear To Whom it May Concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on EPA's Draft TMDL for the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia's WIP.

We own and operate a municipal wastewater treatment plant ("WWTP") that cleans and discharges highly-treated wastewater within the Chesapeake Bay watershed pursuant to a state-issued National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System ("NPDES") permit.

We expect to do our part for the Bay restoration. In fact, our WWTP has just completed an upgrade project with nutrient removal technology. Our existing 0.8 mgd WWTP was upgraded to a 4-Stage Bardenpho suspended growth activated sludge nutrient removal treatment system followed by deep-bed tertiary filters in order to meet Tributary Strategy requirements for the Rappahannock River basin and the assigned wasteload allocations issued via the general watershed permit. Chemical feed and storage facilities were also constructed for supplemental carbon and aluminum sulfate addition which are required to meet nutrient removal requirements. The total construction cost for the upgrade project was approximately \$8.7M and total project costs were approximately \$9.2M.

The upgraded facility will have significantly higher energy and chemical costs. It is estimated that at current flows, additional energy and chemical costs attributed to nutrient removal will be 50,000 per year, increasing to an additional 100,000 per year at design flows. In the past two years, we have increased our rates thirty-two (32) percent to cover the debt service and increased operation and maintenance costs for the WWTP nutrient removal upgrade project.

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We have significant concerns with EPA's Draft TMDL and object to EPA's threatened "backstop" actions against WWTPs. EPA currently proposes to cut Virginia's stringent nutrient wasteload allocations ("WLAs") currently set forth in Virginia's EPA-approved Water Quality Management Planning Regulation, 9VAC25-720, and Chesapeake Bay Watershed General Permit Regulation, 9VAC25-820 (collectively, the "Virginia Regulations"). EPA also threatens to cut WWTP allocations further to so-called "full backstop" levels, which would decrease the concentration basis further (3 mg/L TN and 0.1 mg/L TP at design flow) and possibly even the flow basis to past flow levels (2007 to 2009 average flow rather than design flow). This would reflect an unfair, punitive action by EPA that would do little to advance the Bay cleanup, which necessarily depends on major nonpoint source reductions because the Bay is nonpoint source dominated system with roughly 80 percent of the nutrient load attributable to nonpoint sources.

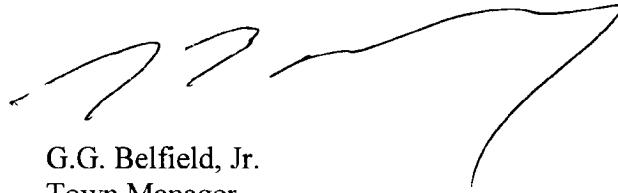
EPA is considering these potential cuts under a new EPA guidance letter on "reasonable assurance" and EPA's initial view that Virginia has given inadequate assurance that nonpoint sources (*e.g.*, agricultural sources) will reduce their nutrient loads according to plan. We disagree with EPA's initial view given Virginia's good track record of achieving nonpoint reductions. We also question whether EPA's unpromulgated reasonable assurance guidance is even legal given that it operates as if EPA's previously proposed but withdrawn reasonable assurance regulation had actually been put into effect.

We understand that the Draft TMDL is fundamentally and materially flawed. These deficiencies are thoroughly documented in the comments of the Virginia Association of Municipal Wastewater Agencies, Inc. ("VAMWA"). We request that EPA fully consider and address all of VAMWA's comments, which we generally support and hereby incorporate by reference as if fully set forth herein.

In closing, what is distinctly missing from EPA's Draft TMDL is any appreciation for the major commitments very recently made by EPA and Virginia (the State's adoption and EPA's approval of the Virginia Regulations in 2005 and 2007) and the major financial commitments that local governments have made to implement those requirements including incurring significant public debt (typically with 20 to 30 year repayment terms) and constructing major new facilities (typically built to last 20 to 30 years). As an organization with a demonstrable commitment to clean water, we object to the waste inherent in EPA's threatened override of the Virginia Regulations and Virginia WIP through the Draft TMDL and its elements that relate to our WLAs.

For further information, please contact G.G. Belfield, Jr. at 804-443-3336.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

G.G. Belfield, Jr.
Town Manager

P.C.: Mr. Alan Pollock, VA DEQ (alan.pollock@deq.virginia.gov)
Mr. Russ Perkinson, VA DCR (russ.perkinson@dcv.virginia.gov)

EPA Water Docket -- Watershed Implementation Plan